

RESOLUTION NO. 02-01

Whereas, From the time of statehood, the people of Washington and their elected representatives have been committed to providing and funding accessible, affordable and high-quality public higher education; and

Whereas, Washington's investment in its public system of higher education and the state's commitment to policies of affordable and predictable tuition and strong financial aid have created the opportunity for citizens to attend the state's colleges and universities; and

Whereas, By providing such opportunity, the state benefits through greater civic involvement, a stronger economy, and an improved quality of life for its citizens; and

Whereas, The Higher Education Coordinating Board, as provided by law, has prepared Master Plans that emphasize the Board's commitment to broad access to affordable, high-quality public higher education, and has made recommendations to the Governor and Legislature in support of those objectives; and

Whereas, These recommendations have supported necessary linkages among state support, financial aid and tuition; and

Whereas, Current economic conditions have resulted in a significant revenue and budget shortfall, jeopardizing the funding for higher education and forcing the re-examination of the state's budgeting and tuition policies; and

Whereas, Revenue options available to the state have been restricted by voter initiatives and legislation that have limited expenditures, reduced taxes and directed increases in funding for specific purposes; and

Whereas, The Governor and Legislature have indicated that raising general taxes is not desirable in the current economic downturn; and

Whereas, Budget reductions currently being considered by the Legislature would threaten the quality of and the access to public colleges and universities; and

Whereas, While state support for higher education has historically reflected a partnership among the state, the colleges and universities and the students, the share of educational costs borne by students and their families has increased significantly over the past two decades;

Whereas, The Governor's proposals have created a foundation for further discussion of public higher education funding;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Higher Education Coordinating Board recommends that the state examine all possible sources of funding — including the possible restructuring or expansion of the state's tax system — to find the means necessary to preserve its financial commitment to public higher education through a permanent and dedicated funding source; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Higher Education Coordinating Board recommends to the Governor and the Legislature that the governing boards of Washington's public colleges and universities be given tuition-setting authority.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That because this recommendation represents a significant change in the state's long-term tuition policy, it should be accompanied by the following actions:

That the governing boards preserve the long-standing state policy of affordable and predictable tuition for all citizens and develop a public process for setting tuition that provides for comment from the Governor, Legislature, Higher Education Coordinating Board, students and the public;

That the governing boards of the public colleges and universities, while recognizing that their students will continue to utilize federal and state financial aid programs, ensure that institutional financial aid be available and increased at a rate compatible with tuition increases.

That the state maintain a baseline of overall funding support and meet its responsibility to fund projected enrollment increases and the state financial aid and scholarship programs, including the increases necessary to ensure students are not deprived of access to higher education due to increases in tuition.

That in addition to providing the funds for financial aid programs to reflect tuition increases, the state also consider improvements in other student assistance programs, such as establishing the Washington Promise Scholarship as a four-year, richer scholarship for students of merit;

That the state provide adequate funding to expand enrollment so colleges and universities are not required to over-enroll to provide needed access to students;

That Washington public colleges and universities meet the increasing demands and needs of citizens while maintaining accessibility for all citizens so they may achieve their higher education goals;

That public colleges and universities continue to seek ways to be more efficient and effective with their resources;

That the public colleges and universities determine how changes in tuition affect the demographic and socioeconomic composition of the student body of public universities and colleges; and

That the Board join with the Governor's Office, the Legislature and the institutions of higher education to further study the relationships between policies of state support, tuition and financial aid.

Adopted:

January 24, 2002

Attest:

Bob Craves, Chair

Pat Stanford, Secretary